

Rhythm Play!



Rhythm Activities and Initiatives
for

Adults, Facilitators, Teachers, and Kids!

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Brain Rhythm

GROUP SIZE

Minimum: 4

Maximum: 40+

Challenge Level: 0

TIME

10 minutes; longer if you are working with younger children

INSTRUMENTS

None; just the body

FORMATION

Large Circle or Staggered Lines

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Get the group to stand in a large circle or staggered lines so that the entire group can easily see you. Let everyone know that getting loose makes the jam, *JAM!* A “jam” happens when everyone grooves together.
- 2) Explain that *breathing* is the most important part of this activity. You may get some chuckles and stares. However, it’s true; participants will need to remember to focus on the rhythm of their breath to get through the activity. Also encourage participants to find their own rhythm. They can go as slow or as fast as is comfortable to them. This activity is not about keeping up with other participants; it’s about finding their own Pulse, so there won’t be a specific group Pulse kept during the activity. The movements purposely cross the left-right planes of the body, or activate the left and right limbs independently; this stimulates the left and right brain integration.
- 3) While standing in place, begin crossing and uncrossing your legs in front of you (left across right, right across left, etc.). Ask the group to do the same so that everyone is doing the movement together. Tell the group to focus on breathing. Coordinating breathing with moving, helps each person find their rhythm.

- 4) After a few moments instruct the participants to start swinging their arms front to back (like a robot walking, only not so stiff). *Keep the feet moving at same time!* Now there should be more laughter as folks simultaneously integrate both movements while focusing on breathing. Give them lots of encouragement as there's more coming.
- 5) After a few moments, add heads turning left and right while feet cross and arms move front to back. *Remind them to breathe!* The breath keeps them connected to their rhythm.
- 6) Next, ask them to begin wiggling their fingers and toes with everything else still moving. *Remember the breath!*
- 7) Finally, invite participants to add blinking their eyes rapidly...seriously! It's a riot, and folks get a kick out of trying to do all these simultaneous movements. Don't forget to cheer them on (if you can cheer while you are performing all the movements as well).
- 8) Count to four and say, "Stop" (a 4-count stop: 1-2-3-4-stop!). Have everyone raise their arms up and stretch high, hold the breath for a moment while stretching, then relax down with an exhale. Add another round of the same or add new movements that you create.

NOTES

This activity is about left and right brain integration. It's a key to successful rhythm experiences, so I often use it as a starter. For younger or novice participants, keep your initial instructions simple. As the group gets comfortable, add more complex movements. You are only limited by your comfort and imagination, so improvise, experiment, and have fun with this!

VARIATIONS

Make up your own movements, and be as creative as you can. Practice a few before you try them with a group. Be sure to have the movements cross the left-right planes of the body, or activate the left and right limbs independently. For adventurous groups, integrate getting down on the floor (sitting or laying) for more movements. Also, have small groups of 3 to 4 people create movements for the entire group to try.

The Pulse

GROUP SIZE

Minimum: 4

Maximum: 40+

Challenge Level: 0

TIME

5 to 10 minutes; longer if you choose

INSTRUMENTS

Anything you have available (bells, Sound Shapes®, Boomwhackers®, shakers etc.)

You could consider clapping, but it makes hands sore if it goes on for too long. The facilitator should use an instrument that can be heard above the group (a cowbell or jam block).

FORMATION

Large Circle or Conglomerate for smaller spaces

INSTRUCTIONS

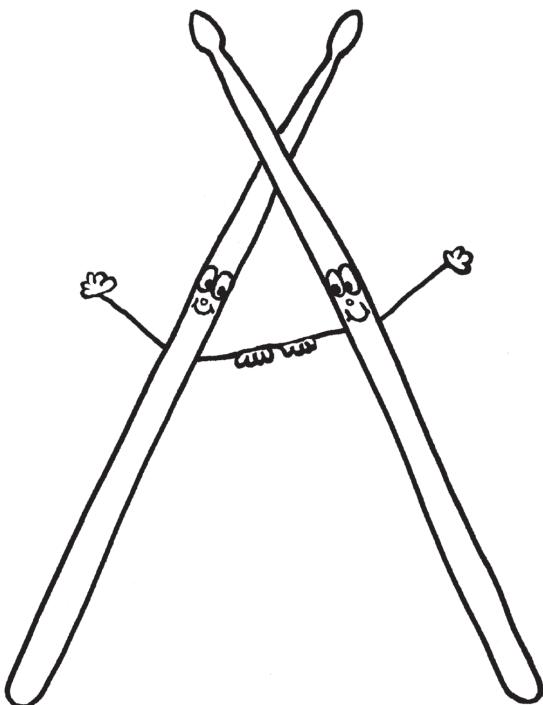
- 1) Play a slow Pulse on any instrument you have: 1-2-3-4 / 1-2-3-4 etc.
- 2) Invite the group to join in and keep the Pulse. Inevitably, it will speed up without you doing anything. Stop the group as soon as this happens, and ask them what they heard. Someone will probably say, "We sped up!" The rest of the group will usually agree. You continue, "That's good to notice; it means we're listening." Let them know they're about to do the same thing (play just the Pulse), but this time their challenge is to keep the Pulse at the tempo (speed) you began: no speeding up and no slowing down.
- 3) Start the Pulse again, and ask the group to join in. The facilitator's job is to hold on to the original Pulse no matter what. It's great practice!
- 4) After a short while you'll feel the group lock into the Pulse. Cheer them on! Now let them know you are going to time the Pulse; their task is to hold an even Pulse for one minute without you (the facilitator) playing. If they waver, alert them with a motion, sound, or funny facial expression, and see if they can bring it back on.



Drum Sticks

"If you can talk, you can sing; if you can walk, you can dance;
If you can clap, you can drum!"

African Proverb



OVERVIEW

If all you had were sticks, you could rock on for days! By sticks, I mean any 10- to 12-inch long cylindrical object with a diameter of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Wood is best, as it's safe for hitting almost any surface, though some types of plastics may work well (just be sure it doesn't shatter at high impact). Dowels are great since they are readily available at hardware stores. Dowels *will* tend to splinter pretty easily if hit against hard surfaces so inspect them after each use.

Bona fide drumsticks work best, being designed for impact. They tend to take much more abuse before they splinter, and there is a mystique to real drumsticks that makes them immediately engaging. They can be a bit expensive so look for the sales. Local music stores sometimes have buckets of sticks on sale. Large stores like American Music Academy or Guitar Center have great sales from time to time and will usually help schools with discounts on bulk orders. The best deals I've found are on line at www.musiciansfriend.com. Look or ask for their promotional drumsticks.

For working with younger children, bulk chopsticks can be found for great prices at Asian markets. I recommend the plastic variety, as bamboo will splinter. You can sometimes find larger sizes of the plastic chopsticks, which give a little more of a satisfying "umph" when hit. Keep in mind that chopsticks really work best for younger children. Wrapping rubber bands in balls around the ends of chopsticks turns them into small mallets and enhances their "bangability."

Again, I recommend getting a large enough "stuff sack" from a camping supply store to keep your sticks together. It makes them easy to store and travel and lasts much longer than a cardboard box.

Here we go, stick time!



Call and Response

GROUP SIZE

Minimum: 2

Maximum: I have done it with as many as 7,000

Challenge Level: 0

TIME

5 to 10 minutes

INSTRUMENTS

1 pair of sticks per person

You can modify good ol' Call and Response to work with any instruments you have.

FORMATION

Large Circle or Conglomerate

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Give each person a pair of sticks. In my experience, the first thing participants usually do is hit each other, so be sure to specify ground rules before you hand them out. You could assign someone to lead a rhythm while the sticks are passed out, providing an activity for the group until you are ready.
- 2) Once everyone has a pair, get their attention and let them know this will be **call** (*leader plays*) and **response** (*group responds*). I usually say, "I play, then you play." Start out with a very simple pattern like a four count on the sticks. The group responds. Then take it from there, adding to or modifying the call. Depending on the age and experience of your group, you'll want to keep the calls simple, yet not too predictable. That is part of the point of call and response: to keep the group listening.



- 3) Keep the tempo slow enough so that the group can follow, and only speed it up as the group is able to keep up; you want to keep a sense of unity, not chaos. For some groups, vocalizing the riff (the short rhythm pattern you created) adds another auditory component to the visual and kinesthetic learning styles. Vocalizing simply means adding verbal sounds to the beat of the stick pattern, instead of only playing the pattern on the sticks.
- 4) Once the group is in a groove and flowing with call and response, you can let them know you are going to add more to your calls to “up the challenge.” You can now make your rhythm patterns (riffs) a little longer and more complicated, but again, keep the riffs within your group’s ability.

NOTES

The power of call and response should not be underestimated. This simple activity tunes the nervous system and ears to the feel and flow of rhythm. Stop the activity before the interest wanes and the group gets bored. If I am using sticks, I like to go right into **Stick-Stick-Shoe-Floor** (pg. 47) from this activity.

VARIATIONS

As with the eggs, go around the circle (if the group is not too large) and have each person do a call to which the group will respond. You can play with the tempo (speed) as well as volume (dynamics) and add vocalizations to add more interest to your calls.



I play, then you play...

Top Ten Challenge (Learned from my friend Anugrah)

GROUP SIZE

Minimum: 2

Maximum: 30

Challenge Level: 5 (Not recommended for participants younger than 5th grade)

TIME

10 minutes

INSTRUMENTS

One Sound Shape® and beater per participant; other types of instruments can be used

The facilitator will need a jam block or cow bell to keep the Pulse.

FORMATION

Parallel Lines (*neighbors should stand shoulder to shoulder*)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Hand out shapes and have the group stand in parallel lines (shoulder to shoulder) with the lines facing each other. If you have an even group, each person will have a partner across the line from them, but even groups are not necessary for the activity.

- 2) One line will play a call, and the other line will respond, but there is a specific pattern. You will play a slow Pulse (at first) to keep the groups in sync.

- 3) The pattern goes like this. *Line A* plays 1 hit on the pulse, and then *Line B* responds with 9 hits. Then *Line A* plays 2 hits on the Pulse, and *Line B* responds with 8 hits. What's happening here is that *Line A* is counting up from 1 to 9, and *Line B* is counting down from 9 to 1; the total of all beats played by both groups is always 10.

- The rules are:
- 1) *Hits must stay on the Pulse.*
 - 2) *Players can only play their instrument (no talking) during play.*
 - 3) *If either line makes a mistake, both lines should start again from the top.*

The pattern sounds like this:

Line A

Hit (1)
Hit-hit (2)
Hit-hit-hit (3)
Hit-hit-hit-hit (4)

And so on...

Line B

Hit-hit-hit-hit-hit-hit-hit-hit-hit (9)
Hit-hit-hit-hit-hit-hit-hit (8)
Hit-hit-hit-hit-hit-hit (7)
Hit-hit-hit-hit (6)

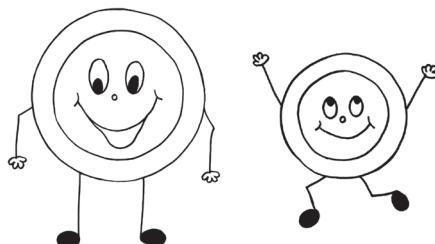
- 4) Begin a nice slow Pulse and then give Line A, a 4-count to begin say, “One-two-three-four-play!” Line A begins on the beat **after** “Play!” Remember to start this with a really slow Pulse; it’s trickier than it seems. End when the group’s energy wanes, or they have gotten all the way through the pattern...and celebrate!

NOTES

The game sounds easy, but actually requires that the participants work very closely with each other. They must listen to the Pulse to stay in sync, and focus on the pattern. This is an excellent team focusing activity.

VARIATIONS

Speed up the Pulse once the group gain some skill. How quickly can they do this without messing up? Also, have them count back to 9 once they’ve reached the end of the first pattern set (*Line A* starts at 9 and *Line B* starts at 1 etc.).





Multi-instrument Activities

"Music and rhythm find their way...
into the secret places of the soul."

Plato



OVERVIEW

These are games that utilize your entire ensemble of instruments. Though they can be done with a homogenous collection, the more instruments you add, the more diverse and interesting the sound.



Let the ensemble rock!



Rhythm Machine

GROUP SIZE

Minimum: 4

Maximum: 30

Challenge Level: 1

TIME

10 minutes.

INSTRUMENTS

This works well with just about any instrument, one per participant. *The facilitator should use an instrument (like a cowbell) that can be heard above the group.*

FORMATION

Large Circle

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) The facilitator plays a Pulse, and invites a brave member of the group to step into the middle of the circle and start a relatively simple rhythm. Now ask another member of the group to physically connect with the first person in the circle (they may link arms or stand back to back with heels touching). The new person will play a different rhythm that fits with the first. You'll now have two people connected, and two rhythms playing (plus your Pulse).
- 2) Invite a third person out, and so on until you have the whole group (or as many people as possible) connected and rockin' out.
- 3) Cheer them on and give a loud 4-count to end, "One-two-three-four-stop!"

NOTES

As more folks join the rhythm, you'll need to keep the Pulse steady, or ask those still in the circle to hold the Pulse with you. Encourage each new person to listen to the rhythms so they can add to the rhythm machine without making it crash.

Also, encourage them to physically connect with each other in ways that are creative yet respectful (i.e. ways that do not disrupt another player's rhythm or movements).

VARIATIONS

You can have the participants make a movement as well as a rhythm to which others add their own corresponding movements and rhythms... the result has a really great effect! You can also ask the last player who joined the "rhythm machine," to step back to the circle and join the Pulse. Then continue reversing the order of participants until the last player (who was the first) comes back to the original circle. Now everyone is playing the Pulse again and you can end with a 4-count stop.



Jam baby!

Small Group Groove

GROUP SIZE

Minimum: 8

Maximum: 40

Challenge Level: 2

TIME

30 minutes

INSTRUMENTS

Use all the instruments you have, one or two per participant depending on group size and the size of your instrument collection.

FORMATION

Small Groups

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Divide the large group into small groups of 3 to 6 people depending on the size of the large group.

- 2) Ask each member of a smaller group to get an instrument, and ask them to mix the instruments in the small groups so they have as varied a collection as possible.

- 3) Instruct each group to create a groove. The groove should have a formal beginning, instrument solos during the groove, and a formal end. They will have 10 minutes to practice, and then each group will perform their rhythm. Remind each group to have a Pulse keeper; the Pulse keeper can change to another rhythm if they'd like, once the groove gets going.

- 4) Give the groups a two or three minutes warning so they can finalize their performances. Ask for a volunteer group to start the show, and loudly celebrate each groups presentation!

NOTES

This is another great activity for utilizing your instrument collection. It gives participants a chance to create their own rhythm and work together for a common groove (goal). It also allows all the (metaphoric) voices within the subgroups a chance to shine. Mill around during the groove creation time to give suggestions and offer encouragement.

VARIATIONS

Require the groups to add body movements and vocalizations to the grooves (if you have willing participants); this adds another element of fun to the activity.



Groovin' together...



Resources

“Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance, order,
rhythm and harmony”

Thomas Merton



OVERVIEW

These days we are lucky to have an abundance of drumming and rhythm information available at our fingertips (Internet) and in our various communities. There are websites, books, CD's, videos, and teachers ready to share great info and keep the inspiration for drumming and rhythm alive and well. On the following pages you'll see some of my favorites, and this is by no means a complete list. Start your search at Google or your local music or bookstore and a whole world of information will open up for you.

NOTE: All Internet addresses were current as of publication date.

Also, I've included a sampling of ideas to get your entire rhythm bag filled by visiting the hardware store. Depending on your skills with power tools, hardware stores have limitless possibilities. The ideas I have here are mostly "off the shelf and ready to play," with a couple of simple projects. If you have a super idea for a percussion instrument, I'd love to hear about it!

For more great ideas, visit:

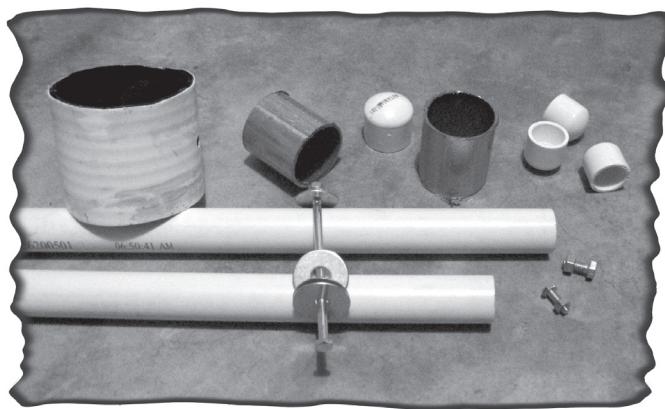
www.rhythmweb.com/homemade/index.html

FANTASTIC RESOURCE! These guys stay up late designing and testing homemade percussion.

www.nancymusic.com/PRINThomemade.htm

www.childrensmuseum.org/artsworkshop/jam.html

www.mudcat.org/kids



Raw materials...

Rhythm Instrument Resources



If you are looking for the best places to get your eggs, sticks, Sound Shapes®, and the Boomwhackers® Tuned Percussion Tubes, here are some great places to look on line. Also, remember to check with your local music stores.

www.westmusic.com

One of the largest catalog distributors of the Boomwhackers® tubes, Sound Shapes®, and musical instruments. Their salespeople are knowledgeable and very friendly!

www.boomwhackers.com

The home of Whacky Music, Inc., and the birthplace of the Boomwhackers® Percussion Tubes.

www.shakerman.com

Wonderful site for all kinds of groovy instruments, and a great place for the Boomwhackers® Percussion Tubes. The owner, "Shakerman," is a delight to work with!

www.rhythmband.com

A super collection of instruments made for schools and kids and the new owners of the Boomwhackers® line.

www.johnsmusic.com

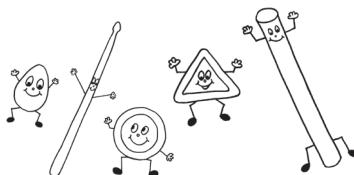
An excellent store in Seattle, and a *fantastic* selection of instruments and books on line!

www.music123.com

These folks have a large selection and pretty good prices.

www.musiciansfriend.com

One of the best places to get inexpensive drumsticks (*Promotional Hickory Drumsticks, Product #444616*). Also great for egg shakers when they are on sale (*Product #441640*).



Drumming: Web Sites

There are so many amazing websites devoted to drumming and drum circle facilitation, I'd have to devote a whole book to do them all justice. The following short list is a wonderful place to get started. Be sure to see the "links" page at each site; wonderful of resources!

www.ZaBoomBa.com

*The home of the Incredible Interactive Drumming Experience!
And amazing programs for Corporate, Schools, and Community.*

www.remo.com

THE BEST DRUMS, and fantastic resources...be sure to check out the Health Rhythms section!

www.rhythmweb.com

Amazing info on worldwide drumming styles and instruments.

www.udrumcircles.com

Fantastic drumming programs, great books, and must read articles.

www.dcfg.net

The Drum Circle Facilitator's Guild - the professional association!

www.drumcircle.com

Arthur Hull is the "Granddaddy" of Community Drumming.

www.drummingwithnina.com

Unique and wonderful educational programs!

www.handsondrum.com

Jim Greiner is a fantastic drum circle facilitator, excellent programs

www.drumcafe.com

Incredible international corporate drumming experiences; tons of fun!

www.azrhythmconnection.com

Frank Thompson (REMO endorsed facilitator), an energizing Rhythm Facilitator and team-building specialist

www.kalanimusic.com

A wonderful drum circle facilitator and drum teacher with great books, DVD's and super CD resources

www.johnsmusic.com

Books (huge selection), DVD's, CD's, instruments; they've got it all

www.rhythmtraders.com

Excellent resource for CD's, books, and instruments.

www.drums.org

Connections to the drum and dance classes in the U.S. and the world!

www.djembe.org

Organized links to drum and dance information around the country.

www.drumjourney.com

An excellent resource listing drum teachers and drum circle facilitators, as well as info on drums and rhythm.

www.drumzaustin.com

A wonderful place to get beautiful traditional drums (and study from a most delightful teacher, Sherry Gingrass).

www.drumskulls.com

Another place for beautiful traditional drums.

www.swps.org

The Seattle World Percussion Society is the sponsor of the annual World Rhythm Festival in Seattle.

Resources For Children's Music

www.musicrhapsody.com

Lynn Kleiner is one of the best facilitators and writers of children's rhythm activities.

www.childrensmusic.org

The Children's Music Web is a wonderful and comprehensive resource.

www.cmnonline.org

The Children's Music Network: Folks across the country who care about quality children's music.

www.childrensmusicworkshop.com

Lots of great info on children's music programming.

www.younghrt.com

Youngheart Music; great products and information.

About the Author...

Kenya Masala is a dose of invigoration and vitality. With charismatic style and effusive energy, he thoroughly engages participants as he facilitates training seminars, leadership development programs, outdoor adventures and educational percussion programs. As the Director of the Source Consulting Group and a national organizational development consultant and trainer, Kenya ushers groups through the hard work of deepening and expanding excellence, and inspires them to celebration. In addition to delivering a unique blend of interactive rhythm facilitation and innovative information on strengthening workplace and community relationships, he designs and develops national multimedia curricula and interactive presentations.

Kenya enthusiastically creates highly effective learning and community building experiences, authentically motivating individuals and groups of all ages.

Kenya is a REMO Drums endorsed drum program facilitator, and the creator of Za Boom Ba: The Interactive Percussion Experience, an interactive theatrical production.

For more information, and to schedule trainings or order materials, contact Kenya at: kenya@sourceconsultinggroup.com

www.ZaBoomBa.com | www.SourceConsultingGroup.com

